



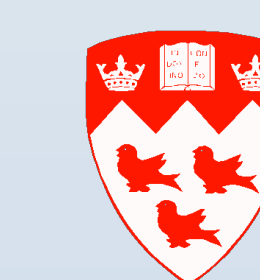
Student perspectives on Mi'gmaq language-learning through multi-modal teaching: A community-linguistics partnership

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McGill

Contextualizing the Project:

Linguists and students work together

The community: Listuguj, QC

- A Mi'gmaq reserve on the border of Québec and New Brunswick. Its ca. 3,400 population mainly speaks English.

The language: Mi'gmaq (Eastern Algonquian)

- Mi'gmaq in Listuguj is now primarily spoken among elders.
- Due to a history of linguistic imbalance, speakers are often hesitant to speak to young people in Mi'gmaq; similarly, younger generations also carry socio-cultural burdens associated with (lack of) knowledge of Mi'gmaq.



The students: Listuguj community members

- Come from a variety of linguistic backgrounds
- Some have spoken the language with family members when they were younger
- Some never have been exposed to Mi'gmaq regularly

The linguists: McGill linguistics students

- Fall 2011: Collaboration grew out of a Field Methods class taught by Jessica Coon & Michael Wagner. Janine Metallic, a Listuguj-born PhD student and Mi'gmaq speaker, was hired as linguistic consultant
- Collaboration required a reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationship between McGill and the Listuguj community
- The product of the class, a wiki (wiki.migmaq.org) devoted to information about Mi'gmaq, was presented to the Listuguj Education Directorate (LED)
- LED approved of the work, and later approached linguists to consult on language programs

Acknowledgments

This project owes its existence to the dedicated efforts of many people. Key in its realization were the following people, parties, and grants:

Mary Ann Metallic, Janice Vicaire, Vicky Metallic, Gail Metallic, Conor Quinn, Alan Bale, Michael Wagner, the community of Listuguj, the Listuguj Education Directorate, and the McGill Department of Linguistics; SSHRC Connection Grant #611-2012-0001 and Heritage Canada Aboriginal languages initiative grant "Tlisuti Napuignigtug-Nemitueg Tlisuti," 2012

Multi-modal teaching

Mode	Implementation	Outcome
Visual	Teachers avoid word-to-word English/Mi'gmaq translation by filling the walls of the classroom with pictures depicting words, sentences, or narratives.	English is not portrayed as a "neutral" language, and Mi'gmaq grammar is more accurately represented with less influence from English.
Auditory	Teachers speak with each other, and often with students in Mi'gmaq.	Students have a frame of reference for everyday Mi'gmaq speech.
Communicative	Students speak early, frequently, and in full sentences— no lists . There is a strong emphasis on context and narrative, which is particularly important for learning an Algonquian language (with a very rich agreement system).	Students gain confidence speaking to each other, using Mi'gmaq for communicating ideas and not just in terms of rote memorization.

Student autonomy in the class

Non-hierarchical Classroom	Flexible, student-guided curriculum	Attendance, grades not held over students' heads
Peer-to-peer/horizontal learning very encouraged	Teach what students want, trust them to determine what is relevant to them	If a student wants to leave, they are free to do so
Differing skill levels of students is an asset	Breaks down teacher>student hierarchy, explicitly values the students' knowledge	Students' priorities are in their own hands
Rejects power dynamic of Western school systems which played a part in marginalizing Mi'gmaq	Learning happens at a pace determined by the students	Students stay because they want to learn



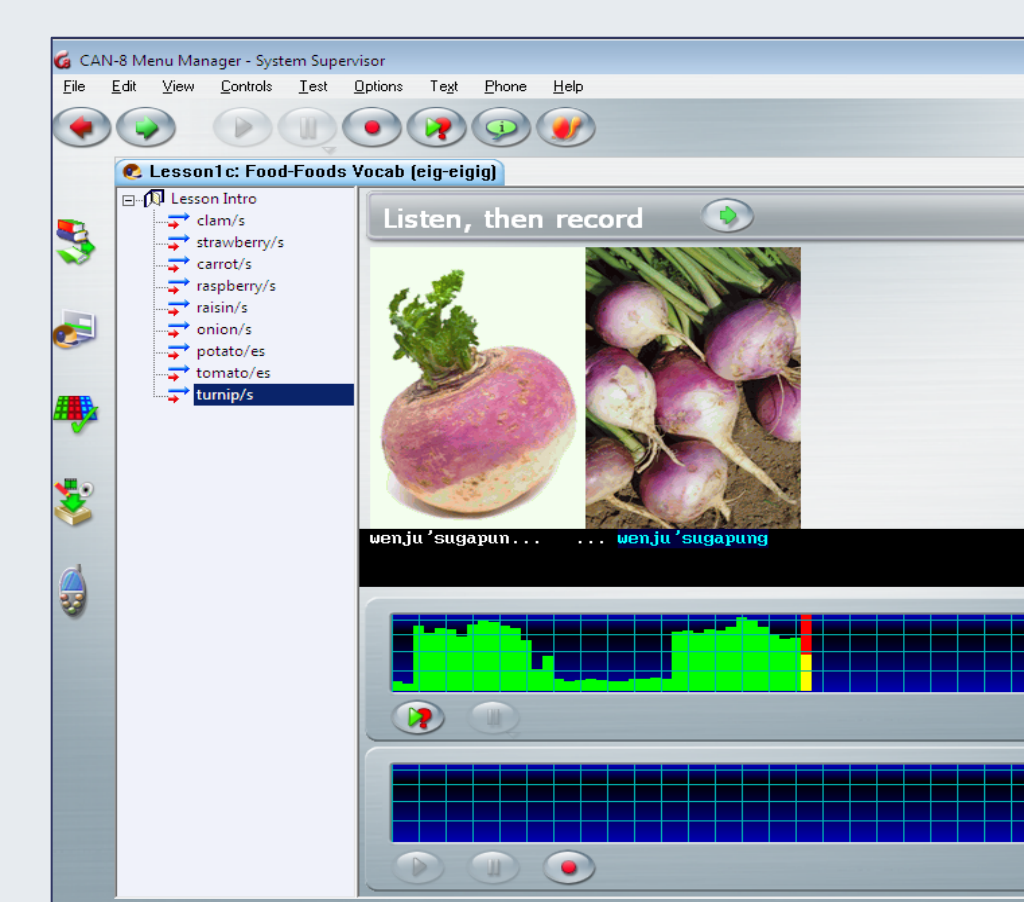
Handout available for download on migmaq.org/

Curriculum documentation

Summer 2012: a linguist/student documented 2 classes: 1 of post-secondary students & another of high school graduates

In-class notes contributed to ad hoc lesson for use for other teachers of Mi'gmaq

Used for providing structure to the digital language program



Listuguj Mi'gmaq classroom for language learners

Teaching principles

Students' self-motivation and determination

- Curriculum is shaped by student needs and questions
- Students make their own decisions concerning their language-learning
- Empowerment of students without undermining teachers' authority

Caring and committed *team* of teachers

- Teachers help and support each other, ensuring that even if a student inquiry was difficult, it did not go unanswered
- Speaking Mi'gmaq to each other as well as to the students gives students more and better exposure to the language
- Understanding non-learner-directed speech is concrete proof of the students' skills

Equality and mutual respect

- Teachers foster an atmosphere of equality and respect
- Absence of mistake-based shame makes students comfortable with teachers and supportive of each other

Digital Support

CAN 8 language-teaching software	App for Android in developmental stages
Supplementary software program providing extra practice for students outside of classroom and distance learners	Allows students to build own lessons tailored to specific individual needs
Included in CAN 8, informed by the lesson plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Dialogues; Vocabulary; Explanations about grammatical points; Exercises	Free and open-source; all code will be available via github.com

Records of the project & Linguistic work on Mi'gmaq

Facebook and Twitter	a member of the project created the Mi'gmawei tli'suti social media pages as hubs for students and other language-learners.
Blog	migmaq.org , housing progress updates, research questions, and serving as a general venue to share relevant information on Mi'gmaq and language revitalization
Affiliated wiki page	wiki.migmaq.org , providing linguistic summaries and analysis of grammatical features of the language, with the goal of creating an accessible, helpful tool for learners, linguists, and learner/linguists
Research	linguistic work on material from Mi'gmaq, including undergraduate theses, a Master's thesis, and 8 conference presentations to date.